



## HFMA UPDATE

by Graham Keen,  
Executive Director

# Yes, it was a very good year

**B**ack in January, a year that seemed a long time coming was suddenly upon us, and we embarked on a series of celebrations and initiatives to mark the 50th anniversary of the Health Food Manufacturers' Association. Now that year is coming to a close and I think we more than managed to do justice to such a significant milestone for the Association and the industry.

We got things started in February at the annual meeting and lunch of the Health Food Institute, where we proudly announced the funding for 50 future applicants to the HFI's Professional Diploma Course. The HFI holds a deserved high reputation for promoting excellence and providing quality training in the UK health food industry, and its Professional Diploma Course gives health food professionals the fundamental knowledge required to operate and contribute to the operation of the modern health store. Given our long-standing and close relationship with the HFI, this initiative could not have been more appropriate, and I know that it has turned out to be a great success, with all 50 places taken very quickly and many candidates working very quickly through the various levels of the course.

In April, we held our 50th anniversary annual meeting of members at the N&OPE show at ExCeL. It featured the presentation of the Maurice Hanssen Award



of Honour to Dr Kartar Lalvani, founder of Vitabiotics, a very worthy winner indeed. Kartar, who is now well into his 80s, has worked in the industry for over 45 years, during which time he has helped to lead the UK vitamin and supplement market from the front. Needless to say, there was a strong '50th anniversary' feel to the occasion, never more so than at the close of the meeting when the show organisers appeared with a surprise celebration birthday cake.

April saw a first for the HFMA, the hosting of a roundtable of 10 respected experts in human nutrition and public health, led by Professor Peter Aggett, Emeritus Professor of Child Health and Nutrition, Lancashire School of Health and Postgraduate Medicine, and Vice-Chair of SACN, the Government's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. Meeting to discuss the future of micronutrient initiatives in the UK under the title 'Micronutrient initiatives for future health', several

areas of concern were raised, and the experts called for a number of recommendations to be considered to address widespread deficiency across sections of the population. Healthcare Professional training, in particular, was seen as an area which needed serious improvement, with one member of the group reporting a mere four hours of dedicated nutritional training being given in a four-year pharmacy and life sciences course!

I had the pleasure to sit in on the roundtable and was very encouraged that this group of eminent experts was helping to lead the way in addressing the very real danger of a shortage of micronutrients throughout wide sections of the UK population.

In June, we marked the 50th with another first, this time by hosting the first meeting of the members of EHPM – the European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers – here in London. We take our role within EHPM very seriously, not least because the formation of the federation was the brainchild of former HFMA President, Maurice Hanssen, and both he and current HFMA Vice President, Penny Viner, were signatories to the original documents founding the organisation 40 years

ago this year.

Of course, the highlight of the year was the magnificent 50th celebration event at the end of June. On a day that will never be forgotten by all present, almost 300 people embarked from Westminster Pier in glorious weather on two boats headed down the river to Greenwich. Here, they disembarked for a champagne reception at the Old Royal Naval College before taking their seats for a sumptuous black tie dinner in the spectacular Painted Hall, known for good reason as 'the grandest dining hall in Europe', and sometimes quite justly referred to as the UK's Sistine Chapel.

It was a wonderful mix of new and old faces, and the assembled gathering was a sea of happy, not to say overwhelmed, faces. The presentation of the HFMA's



Journalist of the Year Award to Dr Hilary Jones was a highlight, as was the stirring speech from the guest speaker, Lord Hunt, an old and wise friend of this industry.

And, of course, it was a personal triumph for me and my colleagues in the HFMA Secretariat, and I still shake my head and wonder how we pulled off such a super event! The post-event messages from many of those that attended confirmed that







a wonderful time was had by one and all.

This being the review of a very good year, it would be remiss of me not to mention the arrival in October of my fifth grandchild!

We rounded off a great year when we hosted our annual Parliamentary reception in the House of Commons in November. The event, 'Helping a nation to be healthier: the next 50 years' was hosted by Carolyn Harris, Labour MP for Swansea East (pictured with our keynote speaker, Dr Marilyn Glenville), and gave Parliamentarians the opportunity to learn more about key public health issues affecting the UK population, and the potential role of the natural health industry in not just helping the nation to be healthier, but along the way reducing cost burden on the nation's healthcare system. The attendees heard speeches from Marilyn, who is well known to us all as a leading nutritionist specialising in women's health, and the HFMA's Chair, Robert Taylor, and both spoke passionately about the HFMA's expert roundtable and the formation of the new Micronutrients and Health All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), chaired by Rosie Cooper MP, which will discuss the key

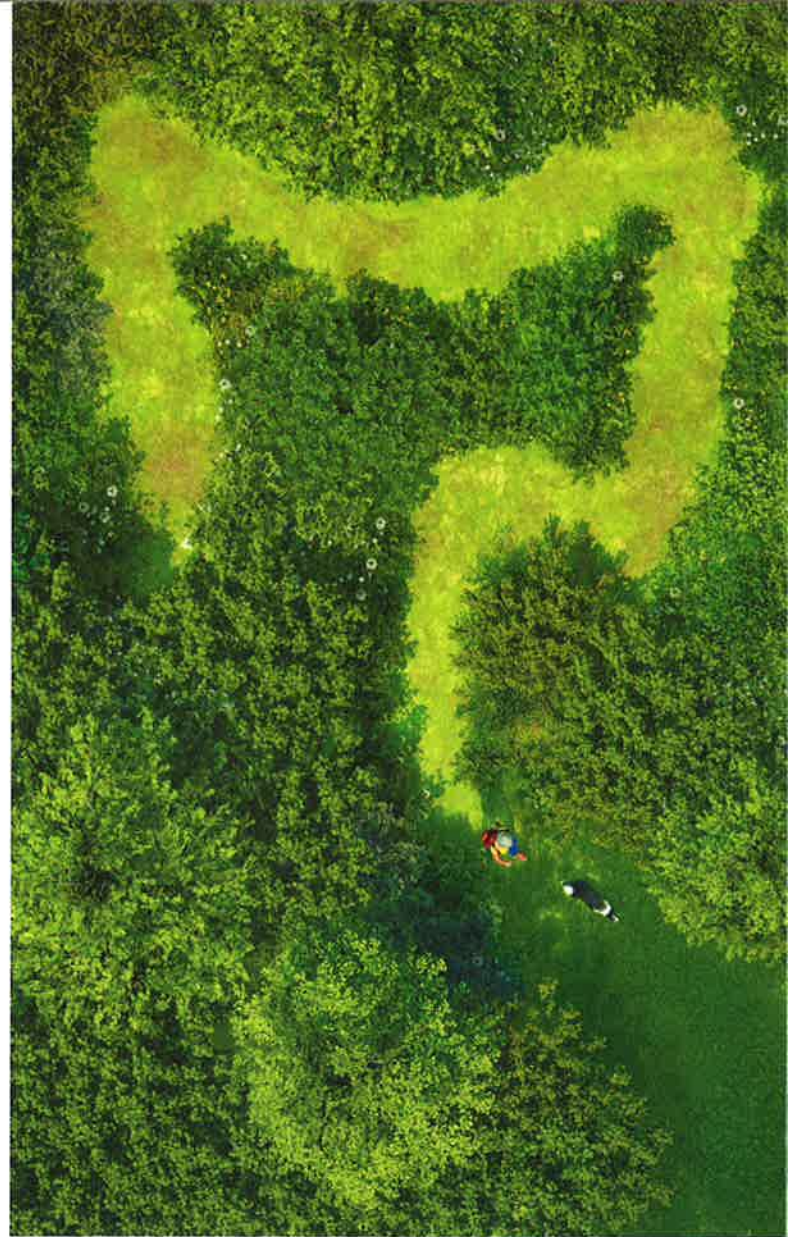


role of micronutrients for future health, bringing this vital area to the forefront of discussions in Westminster. Whilst there are currently a number of health-related APPGs in Westminster, there are none that specifically focus on micronutrients and the role of food supplements, so this new group will be the first of its kind.

So, 2015 has turned out to be a very good year for the HFMA. I'm very happy to say that membership subscriptions reached a record high this year and we continue to have a lot of interest from companies wanting to learn more about the great work we do on behalf of this industry.

To help us in our efforts to protect this industry and benefit from the gold-standard advice we provide, join the HFMA at the earliest opportunity. To learn more about our activities, please contact [graham@hfma.co.uk](mailto:graham@hfma.co.uk).

**HFMA membership is vital to ensure that your company keeps abreast of the fast-changing regulatory environment. The HFMA is the UK's best source of information and most effective defender of our industry's interests. To help the HFMA defend your business at this most critical time contact [hfma@hfma.co.uk](mailto:hfma@hfma.co.uk) or call 020 8481 7100.**



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